

VOICES FROM THE EMPTY WELL

(Long poems)

ALURI BAIRAGI

Transcreation by
Prof. P. Adeswara Rao



PURUGULLA PUBLICATIONS

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First Edition 1996

Published by

PURUGULLA PUBLICATIONS
301 Mayuri Beach Apartments
VISAKHAPATNAM 530023
A.P. INDIA

Price : Overseas : US \$10
Inland : Rs. 75

Printed at

SREE LAKSHMI PRESS
D.No. 6-14-19
14/2 Arundelpet
GUNTUR 522 002
A.P. INDIA

Dedicated to my wife

P. Nagaratnam

who dedicated her time
to serve my teacher and poet **Bairagi**
affectionately when he stayed with us
in Madras and Visakhapatnam.
(from 1965 to 1972)

PREFACE

It was my long-cherished desire to translate the poems of Aluri Bairagi into English. Though Bairagi wrote poems in three languages (Telugu, Hindi and English), I have chosen his long poems written in his mother tongue Telugu to be included in this collection.

Bairagi is one of the greatest poets of modern India, who have taken poetry to the highest realms of human understanding. He is a poetic genius of very high order comparable with the greatest poets of all time. As a creative writer of many dimensions and a thinker of deep penetrating insight and high sensibility, he is outstanding among his contemporaries. His poems abound in universal feelings, profound thoughts and rich imagery. All his poems bear the stamp of his personality. He is a rare poet of modern India.

Aluri Bairagi(1924-1978) acquired name and fame for his poetry in Telugu and Hindi in his life time, but not to that extent he actually deserved. He is a poet with a prophetic vision and shot into prominence after his death like great men of all time. One of his three long poems included in this collection ' Voices from the empty well'('Nuthilo Gontukalu') is considered to be a modern classic, comparable to 'The Waste Land' of Dr. T.S. Eliot. Bairagi's 'Agama Geeti' (Advent Hymn'), a collection of his poems published posthumously, bagged the prestigious Sahitya Akademi award in 1984.

The three long poems included in this collection were written between 1946-1950, soon after the end of Second world war. The sensitive poet Bairagi was moved by the horrors of the destructive war and the human suffering of gigantic proportions not witnessed by human society before. Though we can find absorbing pictures of human suffering and gloom under the shadow of the holocaust which the war has left behind in these poems, Bairagi's sharp intellect questions the wisdom of modern man who, caught in the cobweb of industrial civilization, lost his direction. At the same time Bairagi presents man in his long journey through time and space seeking a way of liberation for his agonised soul. His compassion for the suffering, his broad sense of humanism, his quest for truth in its complexity, his contempt for hollow knowledge, his profound knowledge of all religious scriptures, his rich creative imagination and his intellectual indifference are interwoven in his poetry making it unique and universal. The rich spectrum of his poetic imagery projects his beaming thoughts through an aesthetic and artistic medium.

Bairagi treated poetry as a means of self-emancipation. He lived, suffered, starved and died for what he considered as truth which manifested itself in different forms. He bore the cross of his distressed life throughout and ended his life with the hemlock of starvation unto death. He always felt and held that the world is a prison and longed for the liberation of human soul from all its bonds.

Translation or transcreation of poetry from one language into another is not an easy task. It is generally expected of a translator that he shall conceive the poem in its real spirit and recreate it in the target language so that the charm and the effect of the original poem is preserved. Though the form, content and the tone of the original poem are preserved in the translation, still it will mould itself into a distinct piece of artistic creation.

I have tried my level best to present the English translation of the three long poems of my esteemed teacher and poet Aluri Bairagi. I wish and hope that the English speaking world across the continents will enjoy the poems of a rare creative genius through this translation.

I am extremely thankful to Sri P. Ramanujam and Dr. C. M. Mohan Rao, who have gone through the transcreations and given good suggestions.

Prof. P. Adeswara Rao.

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LIFE

What are you searching for
in the ruins of life?
Happy dreams
distorted and scattered around?
Broken pieces of colourful glasses?
Weeds removed from paddy fields?
Unearthed lies of secret love-affairs?
Torn up cigarette boxes?
Extinguished cigarette-pieces?
The slowly sliding feathers of birds
gliding on the waves of wind?
Discarded tinsel and glittering tin?
Rust-eaten sheets of iron?
Worn-out and torn up love-letters
used for packing medicines?
Black and red rags?
Distortions of former beauties?
A fistful of dust and a handful of ashes?
The lasting wealth of your life?

In these ashes are lost
hopes and despairs,
smiles and cries,
drops of blood, tearful eyes,
a bit of life, a bit of death!
What are you searching for?
What am I searching for
in the ash-heap of life?
For the extinguished sparks of faiths?
For the faded flowers of ideals?
For the traces of dried-up tears?
For the stains of blood in ashes
in the twilight of death and life,

in the dense shadows, spreading
over the black smoke of dull darkness,
on the footprints of scattered dreams?

What am I searching for in the ruins?
For a ray of the glory of bygone days?
For a line of a forgotten song
to endure these dark moments,
to drive the static chariot of time
with the help of a straw of grass,
with a broken string of this garland?

Blood-stains of broken hearts
will be wiped by the flow of tears.
Traces of the evening-redness of life
will be wiped out by dense darkness.
Tired hustle and bustle falls asleep,
covered by a blanket of silence.
Living corpses are groaning.
caught in the rolling crusher of life;
their sweat, tears and blood gushing out,
their bones broken, sinews twisted,
threads of nerves hanging out,
streams of blood pouring.
Dried heaps of flesh and bones on one side—
glittering drops of blood on the other:
the oil, the essence of life,
that sustains the lamps of the world.
The light of the lamp
is vomiting blood on this side.
Am I looking for
what has not melted
in the lonely darkness?

This is a dry and charred field,
an ash-filled, hard graveyard,

charred black bushes of weeds,
 smallpox on the skin of the earth.
 The surviving tree-treasure of the land
 is the sharp thorny bush,
 biting when touched.
 A crawling insect cannot be seen,
 cries of jackals cannot be heard.
 What is left to search for
 that has not turned into dust?

Spending dark nights,
 crossing the tidal ocean
 of sacrificial blood
 on floating corpses,
 have the journeys of human lives
 reached the shores of death?
 Have they opted
 for this land of the dead?
 Foam on his thirsty lips,
 blisters on his aching feet,
 each step an unreachable distance,
 each moment an unbearable burden,
 looks full of gloomy darkness,
 his dry heart throbbing,
 is the mad traveller running
 only to have mirages for his thirst?

Why these races and wasteful attempts?
 Why to create false hopes
 for the illusive lives?

Hard meditations and sacrifices,
 bloody worships and mad prayers
 in front of a demoniac idol,
 in front of the living Saturn?
 It is a rugged stone,

an immovable hard stone
bruised by
the cold shivering touches
of prostrating heads for ages.
Your pathetic prayers,
your humility and pitiful cries
do not work here.
Your tears will be lost
in a heap of dust
and no trace
will be found on the ground.
Faint cries of ripples of a breeze,
groans of lonely human souls
in this endless emptiness,
in this dumb pathos of life!
Shadows that cannot enter
from any side
are invisible walls
in the prison of life.
Where is the path of light
in the night?
Where is the land of liberty?

Darkness!
Darkness of dense despair!
The universe
is a heap of ashes in an oven,
our lives, insects crawling
in the corpse of this darkness,
pigs rolling
in a dirty pond,
vultures flying
on a corpse.

Where is that charm of life?
Where is that pomp and splendour

flashing like lightning for a while,
 glittering and gleaming,
 displaying gait and glee
 through the golden veil of daylight,
 through the shining golden colours?
 Did it perish,
 crushed in one moment
 in this ugly darkness?
 In what hot winds
 has perished
 this wave of fragrance
 spreading in the robes
 of the charming maiden of dawn,
 in the morning-light of life?

Once upon a time,
 perhaps, there were days,
 when there was no dense darkness,
 when life was not a battle.
 Have we come too late?
 I cannot say, but
 when we came,
 when we ran to catch,
 the cart of life
 had already left.

What is left here
 to search for
 that has not turned into ashes?
 Smiles of babies in the clouds,
 blossoming flowers in the woods
 dancing rays on the mountains,
 jewels of stars at night:
 Are these the ornaments of life?
 Is there any pity in the butcher?

Look! These are bloody heaps of lives
cut, sliced and weighed in pieces,
kept separately
and ready for sale.

The lingering hope of dark comers:
Abortions in hospitals,
foeticides and birth of dead babies,
results of committed sins.

The birth of a baby,
wrapped in blood
in the morning
carried to the funeral pyre
in the evening.
The embryo of life
moves up and down
like a blade of grass
caught
in the whirlpool of the universe.

Sin, born in a dark room,
is a curse
following like a shadow.
Go fast as life is faster.
Go faster and faster.
In the heat of the fever of life,
a shadow is following you
from behind.
In that shadow
love and kisses,
compelling calls of bodies,
shivering cold of souls
in the burning embrace
of the heat of fever.

Again,
Shadows of birth and death:
footprints of the world,
onerous lust for life,
debauchery in the mortuary.

A doctor's love-affair
with a patient's wife
is the first lesson in love
for nurses.

The rotten stink of abhorrence
gives pleasure to insects
living in rotten things.

The fragrance of flowers
covers
the smell of sweating bodies.

The ornament of bodies
hides
the ugliness of rotten souls.
Gleaming smiles are masks
in the dark depths
of hidden crimes in the mind,
salutations in forgiveness,
lamentations in the sounds
of triumphant trumpets.

New leaves of life,
sprouting
from the trunks
drenched in blood.

Victory-bells ringing
over the corpses
of a hundred defeats.

Shivering ecstasy of a moment,
a life-time confinement.

Momentary loves and hip-swinging girls,
dazzling charms in the light of lamps

or in the bright light of the morning,
faltering words and shivering voices
in the naked truth of a native dialect,
dull visions and a flattened pen-nib.
We will be drowned in surprise
when the colours fade away,
when the face of beauty perishes
like a crushed flower.

What is left here to search
that has not fallen to the ground
at the first stroke?

These unlucky orphans
are the friends
of dogs, jackals and flies,
sitting like tired ostriches,
bending their heads in despair,
shivering with fear,
when hunted for their lives.
when there is no way
to escape in the open desert,
to hear the last judgement
for their crimes,
to see the fall
of the curtain of death!
Is there any way
to liberation and peace
for the human race.
the slave to powers beyond its reach,
the heir to its own unknown sins,
stuck
in the mire of life,
struggling to go ahead?

Famines, storms and dreadful earthquakes,
deadly killings of world.wars,

the flames of hell of envy and hatred,
altars of human killings everywhere,
sky-touching cries of horror,
triumphant voices of the god of life.

Where will human beings arise,
drowned in the agony of death-struggle,
tossing heads and legs in suffocation.
lost in the hell-pangs
of the nightmare of life?
Where is the salvation we are looking for?
This darkness has stretched and spread
unto the deep roots of the tree of life,
drowning all river-banks.
In this darkness,
tears dripping like dewdrops
are the only consolation for us.
relatives leaving us
unwillingly.
Am I really searching for this?
For the price of lives in ashes?

ESCAPE

(Prelude)

Life is eating itself,
it is eating itself
like a candle
to fill its hungry stomach.
It is eating itself
steadily, slowly,
eagerly and disorderly.

It is counting minutes
in the clock of the heart,
slipping away every moment
like sand from a fist,
dripping from the hole of a pot
like the water of time.

Death is not an occasional guest.
it is a chasing lender!
Death takes birth with birth
and dies with death.
It is lost in the soil
along with this body.
It is a limited journey,
but the petrol is limited.
In a moment, this car
(If there are no accidents before that)
is bound to stop
certainly somewhere
in a deserted forest
or in the middle of a desert.
A car with limited petrol!
There are no measuring rods:

calculations are of no use.
 None can say how many miles
 the car can go with limited petrol.
 Your sweat and tears are a waste:
 even blood cannot run this car!
 Faded faces.
 worn out joys and books.
 shortsightedness, forgetfulness,
 dullness of the mind,
 bald head
 peeping through thin hair.
 Life is eating itself:
 the burning wax of candle
 is dripping in drops.
 The red rose is sinking
 in the western sea.
 The engine has whistled,
 the station is nearing.
 Alighting the train,
 we will travel
 with empty pockets,
 in a directionless direction,
 towards a starless star.

(Escape)

Let us go, closing
 the credit and debit accounts of life,
 deducting time
 from the total of the universe:
 let us take
 the remaining zero!
 Invisible
 is the thousand-eyed cobra of the sky,
 the blind python of earth
 is napping.

After the decline
of the poisonous tide of passion,
a murmuring prisoner
moved out from prison, saying:
"Where is my liberation?"
Guards, lost in deep slumber,
having drunk the wine of sleep,
are ignorant
of the movement of shadows,
of the decay of walls,
of the unknown midnight alarms.
Silence on all sides,
nothing is heard
but the snore of demons.

Where is the princess?
The princess is perhaps not there.
Who is my companion?
Dense bush of loneliness!
Roaming wild animals!
How shall I go ahead?
The moon is shining
on the barren land of dark lives!
Silence is singing
like the burden of the heart,
while the strings of nine nerves vibrate.
This moonlight
is the pollen of flower-ghosts
withered by the touch of snow,
the extinguished oil-lamp of life
at the early hours of the night!
It is the dream of sleeping fairies,
the stream of silent smiles
in the burial-ground of sleep.
Today, there is
a white storm of moonlight

on these green meadows.
 The sound of dry leaves
 is a moving bow of violin.
 Princess! Princess!
 You are my princess,
 tender-bodied as jasmine flowers!
 Can't you give me company
 for tonight?
 Can't you follow me?

Forget the dust of the roads!
 Whose monopoly is forgetfulness?
 Groans of office-steps,
 noise of typewriters,
 stubbornness of corpse-chairs,
 ink-stains on the table!
 Stern looks of spectacles,
 demonic forms---
 forget yourself!
 Life is a white paper!
 Let us go, princess,
 you are liberated from prison.
 Let us go,
 let us go before
 black shadows
 napping in the blanket of moonlight,
 dreaded demonic illusions
 of the nether-world's nightmares.
 transform themselves
 into their shapes,
 blocking our path
 with their piercing
 eastern blood-red eyeballs.
 Do not ask where to go,
 forget all questions and suspicions.
 Let us go from here.

Take an empty bag in your hand.
Wherever it may be,
far away,
beyond envious arrows
shot by the hunter of life,
beyond the lender's
compound interest-like
mornings and evenings,
beyond attachments and detachments,
beyond pronouns and cases.
beyond the grammar of life,
beyond the disobedience of the senses,
beyond the dictatorship of numbers,
beyond the enmity of machines,
beyond the fraternity of fools,
beyond the fragrance of poisonous flowers,
beyond halves and quarters,
beyond the decimal problems of daily business,
beyond the basic principles of algebra.
Let us go far away,
wherever it may be,
beyond propaganda,
beyond prostitution,
beyond the chloroform of sorrow,
beyond the veil of darkness.
beyond the half-naked daylight
in swimming-suit,
beyond the disease of fields.
beyond the belief of leeches,
beyond the assurance of vultures.
beyond the pity of wolves,
beyond crocodile tears,
beyond the humility of jackals,
beyond the meditation of cranes,
beyond the love of black bees,
beyond the knowledge

of the well-being of others.
 Let us go far away,
 wherever it may be,
 leaving behind
 the shadows of ruined homes,
 the traces of murders,
 the spy-eyed shining lamps,
 the sins of red-light lanes,
 the thirsty lips of dry fields,
 forests with clumsy-hair,
 hard mountain-passes
 like breasts of a barren woman,
 like the forts of the universe,
 blackened by frozen blood,
 like orbits, drawn by fortune.
 Today, let us go far away!
 We spent many days
 lulling the pain with stories,
 forgetting the doom in love,
 sprinkling smiles through lips,
 trampling flowers in the mind,
 being slaves of humour,
 writing commentary on the wailing.
 We spent many days
 and removed many cobwebs.
 In the evenings, in parks
 we threw a bait to time,
 eating peanuts, listening to radio news,
 dreaming harmless daydreams
 in the intoxication
 of a penny's cigarette.
 saying: "Urvasi¹ sat
 on the corner of this bench."
 Bell-sounds of emotions
 in the spell of useless words!
 Gamble on a chessboard:

life is a gamble.
Why are you drowned in sadness?
If the pawns die,
the king and the queen win,
forever, a desire remains unfulfilled,
a thirst unquenched.
This is a war, this is a famine,
life is an illusive play,
life is a momentary madness,
life is an entertainment useless,
an abyss of dense darkness.
Why are you drowned in sadness?
We waited ever so long
eyes wide open as windows,
for what we knew only in dreams,
for what never happens.
The curtain of the night has fallen,
the lamps of despair and defeat
have begun to shine one by one,
sins are unfolding one by one.
Tired legs are walking towards home,
tired eyes are searching for a shelter,
birds are eager
to reach their nests of dreams
on the banyan tree of sleep.
Shall we go home
or sit for a while?
After a moment
no creature stays here,
nothing is heard
in the deserted streets
but for whispers in the ears
of the silent darkness,
sounds of boots
of a forsaken traveller,
barking of dogs.

Nothing is visible
but for the light of street-lamps!
Shall we go home
or sit for a while?
Let us go far away
from the aggressive tiger
of tomorrow,
from the dreadful biting cold
of yesterday,
from the park, from the people,
from the light, from the voices.
from the silent darkness,
from the boring faces
of lifeless puppets.
Let us go,
let us do something.
Let us go, let us go.
Where is our Jerusalem²?
Where is our Benares³?
Where is our Mekka⁴?
Where is our Bodhi⁵ tree
that gave shelter
to suffering millions?
Where is the pilgrimage of souls?
Where is the fragrance
of heavenly coral flowers?
Crossing the oceans
of water, milk and blood,
thrusting a sword
in the chest of the demon,
can you get the diamond-lamp
shining on the head
of the thousand-headed cobra
in dense woods, where
even ants cannot enter?
Throw a piece of meat

to the three-headed hound.
Break the heart of the rock
in which lies the cage.
A parrot is in the cage
and in the parrot
dwells your life:
a pilgrimage of souls.

Let us go,
do not ask about directions,
rule out all suspicions.
Today
there is no pair of vultures
that can give an answer.
Remove suspicion
and show us the path,
where even our shadows
do not dare to follow.
Who can give company
but for the hissing wide-headed cobra,
the chasing hound,
you for me and I for you?
When the sound of our steps
follow us,
when our heart-beats
accompany us,
when the thousand-headed cobra
gives us shelter,
when the hound
gives us company,
let us go ahead
without looking backwards.

Let us go,
walking on for days and nights,
leaving behind the tiresome sighs.

There is a stage for a journey,
 but where is the stage for escape?
 There is a destination for pilgrims,
 but where is destination for refugees?
 Who can give shelter to refugees
 who run away from shelter?
 Who can give courage to those
 who run away in panic
 seeing their own shadows?
 The bed is the end of the walk,
 but, for this walk there is no bed.
 There is neither end nor meaning
 for this walk,
 yet it is not a waste.
 There is beauty and joy in the walk.
 there is rhythm, rhyme and metre.
 Let us go alone, singing.
 I will show you the stars,
 standing on a deserted jungle-path
 on a summer-eve,
 when hot winds cool down
 touching
 the cold heart of darkness.
 "Behold, there is the pole-star,
 see the chaste Arundhati."
 Let us catch glow-worms
 gliding in the shades of trees
 on a rainy night,
 and leave them to their fate.
 If the rain lashes at us,
 stand beneath the branches
 of a banyan tree.
 Go when the rain stops.
 See the winter-mornings,
 the tender golden brilliance,
 and the conversion

of our breaths into vapour.
Walk and hear
the sound of dry leaves
trampled under your feet.
After the long walk,
when we lie down in peace
at that place where
the earth ends and the time stops,
looking at the sky with closed eyes
we shall see our Jerusalem,
our Benares, our Mekka
and the shade-giving Bodhi tree:
the pilgrimage of souls.
We shall smell the fragrance
of heavenly coral flowers!

(Epilogue)

Life is eating itself.
Lamps that lighted hopes
in pathetic eyes,
are vanishing one by one.
Black curtains are falling
one by one.
Soon
rats will run around
on the empty dais,
insects will crawl.
Spectators
left for their homes
one by one.
For, how long can the play last?
That is the court of Indra⁶,
the divine music of Gandharvas⁷!
Where is Rambha⁸?
Where is Urvashi?

Where are those celestial damseis?
 Has the last music
 of pomp and splendour been played?
 Flies are humming,
 lyres with broken wires,
 overturned empty vessels,
 spilled liquids,
 dried paint of sandal-paste
 and faded flowers.

Walk
 on the left-over food of life
 with strides of fancy.
 Flies are humming here.

Life is running away from death,
 but where can you run away from life?
 Forgetfulness is running away
 from recollection,
 but where can you run away
 from forgetfulness?
 You can run away from prison
 to an open place,
 but where can you run away
 from the open place?
 A wall can escape from the shadow,
 but how can you escape from the shadow?
 Art is an escape from life,
 but how can you escape from art?
 A dream is an escape from awaking,
 but how can you escape from a dream?
 A song makes you forget the path,
 but where is the path
 that makes you forget the song?
 An exit blocks the path of entrance,
 but where is the path
 that leads to the exit?

Cities are built on burial grounds,
but where is the need
of burial grounds for cities?
Bodies are firewood for firewood,
Why take pride in your bodies?
A smile is the floating foam of tears,
but how can you float on a smile?
Flowers are the decoration of thorny bushes,
but how can you decorate flowers?
Unrest is running away from peace.
but how can you give peace to unrest?
Time is spending life,
but how can you spend time?
There is a prisoner in the prison,
but how can the prisoner escape?
There is a prison in the prisoner,
but how can he escape from that prison?
How to run away?
How to slide away?
How to slip away like sand
from the grip of time?

VOICES FROM THE EMPTY WELL

(There is no water in the well from which the voices are rising: It is an empty well. Such a well is a symbol of fall and death. There is no life in it: light will not reach those who dwell in the well. There is no support for them to climb up. They cry, but their cries are not heard by those who are outside. The depths of the underground separate them from the outside world, They are not even travellers: they have no destination and they have no friends with them except darkness. They are the cursed Nahushas, who have gone blind with their unbridled pride. But that sin is not limited to them alone. It extends to all human beings. 'The voices from the empty well' is a poem of doubt. Here, man is searching for a path. He is not in a position to say that there is no other right path than this(Nanyah patha vidyatayanaya). The poem that starts with darkness deals with the 'lives, lost in the endless agony'. The protagonists of this poem Hamlet, Arjuna and Raskalnikov, undergo an orderly evolution in the state of doubt. Hamlet's agony precedes action; Arjuna's agony is momentary in the field of action; the agony of Raskalnikov comes after the action. But the agony of these three operates on the same plane--the natural agony of man. It follows him at all times. A person who will not feel the pangs of that agony cannot attain perfection. Is there no way of escaping it? Yes, there is: through the worship of the manifested powers, the negation of self. In this poem, the 'I' does not represent the poet; it is the complete identification of the poet with feelings. The poet's voice, in my opinion, can speak out infallibly only when it identifies itself with the world. It is my belief that great poetry will emerge only then--when the feelings of the poet identify themselves with the feelings of the world.--Bairagi.)

"And voices singing out of empty cisterns
And exhausted wells." 'The Waste Land',
T.S. Eliot.

1

Night,
dark night,
dreadful dark night.
the primeval darkness has spread
over the sky,
over the earth
and over the orphaned heart.
The dense fog of darkness
has covered
the ancient world,
moving towards doom.
There is no sound, no wind
and no pity for the darkness.
The sightless, formless and timeless
moment of dense darkness
is the dark slough of lives.
The dreadful cobra of dull time
is rolling
between the earth and the sky.
The void is filled with
the piled up pollution
of the dirty times.
This moment of dense darkness
is lifeless and odourless,
a bitter deadly poison.
a metre with broken backbone.
The night is sleeping,
the world is sleeping,
the lyre is sleeping
and the voice of the dumb singer

is sleeping.

The black braid of hair,
the reddish youthful feet
and the tinkling of their anklets,
the slackened embraces,
the rise and fall
of the ripened breasts
and the high heart-beats
of the dancer
are sleeping.

The lustrous dreams
about the lover
and the dreamy nets
of the arts of love
are hovering
in the closed eyes of the beloved.

The hopes of faded flowers,
the despairs of buds,
the warning of thorns
and the silent chirps of crickets
are sleeping.

The voices of the night
are not heard
in the hanging leaves.

The faded lines on the forehead
are not seen,
nor are those
on the fallen petals.

How can I read the palms?

Millions of stars and planets.
the budded gleams of glow-worms
of the human intellects,
the golden flash of lightning,
the rays of the lights
of trains and ships,

the quiescent light of lamps
in the peaceful huts,
the blue shining lights in wetlands
and on the bellies of the seas,
the fickle light of eyes:
many are the lights,
but there is no movement
for the darkness.
The path is filled up
with broken wheels,
the symbols of history
are abandoned,
the flag is caught
in the thorny bush,
the footprints of wayfarers
have swallowed each other,
the swords and cutlery
have rusted.
Where are the bottles of perfume
of bygone days?
The abandoned traces
of unearthed civilizations
are lavatories!
Where are Rome, Babylon
and Indraprastha?
When the manuscript is lost,
who can trace the writer?
Untraceable are the traces of ships,
sailed in the sea of darkness.
The plants, planted
at the threshold of the burial grounds
will bear no fruits.
At the end
only darkness remains
and there is no movement
for the darkness.

This darkness
is not aware
of the beginning and the end
of winter or spring
and of limited and unlimited.
Here
there is no daybreak.
Where is the proof
and where is the path
in the void
between the earth and the sky,
filled
with the illusory darkness,
like the chimney of the world,
painted by time
with ink-black smoke?
Whose face is hidden
behind this black mask?
Which heart is concealed
behind these clothes?
What pleasure of touch is there
in the cover of emptiness?
Where is the path
that leads to the temple?
Where is the pulse of darkness?
I can know the path
only if I can feel
the pulse of darkness.
I can know the path
only when the bells begin to ring.
But in this dense darkness.
who knows
what is at the threshold?
The demonic snore of darkness
is the ink-stain
that wiped out the letters.

In the dreadful forest
of the civilized world,
in the silent wilderness
of the dense influx of crowds,
at this moment,
when the human soul weeps
like a motherless child,
waking up
at the quiet midnight,
there are extinguished lamps,
vomiting pens,
uncultivated lands
and broken ploughs.
In the sweat, pointing
towards the future dangers,
in the sorrow, proving
the past compulsions,
every eye,
empty and helpless.
gazes at the sky
desperately,
with Doomsday's desperation
for the rain,
for the rain of bombs.

In the steady silence,
standing before the sharp darts
of hundred thousand sounds,
under the speed of the steeds
of different sound waves,
in the real silence of still waters,
beneath the working hands
and the talking tongues
in the tired heart.

before love and doom,
 in the ripened silence
 filled with mature expectation,
 everyone is waiting
 with patience

for the change,
 for the judgement,
 for the sound of the final bell.
 for the forsaken feeling.

Every man in a room,
 termites in his mind;
 every man in a river,
 a whirlpool in his heart;
 every man in a prison,
 a trap of gallows in his heart:
 every man in a machine,
 screw-nuts in his heart:
 every man in a fire,
 a chimney in his mind;
 every man in a bush,
 a tiger's roar in his heart.
 There is a tomb in every heart.
 there is a corpse,
 there is a skull,
 there is a ten-branched banyan tree,
 there is a hollow
 in the trunk of the banyan.
 Where is the way to fly
 for the gray quail in the hollow?
 Where is the boat
 to cross the darkness?
 Alone, and alone
 like a stump
 in the street of shadows,

like a shadow
under the shades of stumps,
like a ghost gone astray,
like a helpless street dog,
I am roaming about
in the darkness.
Where in the darkness
is the face I knew?
Where is the pleasure
which I do not know?
I do not aspire
for the bright light
of pure intellect;
I do not aspire
for the radiant love
painted
by the colour of sacrifice;
I never dare to command
the dark illusions of life:
I never like to measure
the depths of the ocean
of invisible secrets:
neither do I hope
nor dare to hope to see
the bright dawning peace
of the morning
or the golden light
of a nectarous full moon;
never do I aspire
for the bright white lotus
that blooms
on the edges of the banks
beyond the storms
of births and deaths,
and that blossoms
in the waters

of divine places of pilgrimage
 beyond the reach
 of the cursed breaths of suspicion.
 One ray,
 one slender streak of light
 is enough for me,
 a moment of burning
 of the earthen lamp,
 a moment of light,
 a particle of light,
 a ray of light.
 The deep roots of darkness
 are not to be seen
 in this garden,
 the voices of the actors
 are not to be heard
 in the play,
 you look at them leisurely,
 when they lie flat
 on their back
 like logs in a tunnel,
 after washing the colour
 on their faces,
 then you can hear
 the echoes of the groans
 of a rhinoceros
 in their heart
 and the black crematorium
 is visible
 on their ugly faces.
 The appearance,
 like Takshaka¹⁰, disguised
 as an old Brahman¹¹,
 deceives
 the frightened Parikshit¹².
 The hidden awaits

stripping her blouse
and tests
the sown seed of patience.
There are only two ways
to know the way:
the first is to achieve victory
after waiting for light,
the other is to acquire farsightedness
in the dense darkness.
One is the way
where the birds fly
in the blue sky,
the other
is the dirty and muddy way
of insects.
Parrots and sparrows
will speak in glee
from the opened doors of directions;
they make merry
while circling in the air
and chirp,
resting on the green branches.
But, then, what can owls,
cockroaches, bats and worms do?
They wait for the darkness,
until all the worlds
seek shelter
in the lap of night.
O Adventurer!
The deep roots of darkness
are not found in this garden.
You pierce into the darkness,
in to the heart of the darkness,
you pierce into the darkness,
pierce into the abyss of souls,
into the sorrows and tragedies.

into the despairs and yearnings
of the world,
into the sighs
of the disheartened residents
of the underground hells,
with the determination of ants
and with the patience of worms,
by chiseling this rock,
by penetrating this soil,
and this diplomacy,
visible and deceptive.
You go to the interior
of the underground shrine,
to the dull beating pulse
of this darkness
while piercing
the outer membrane of the eyes,
while conquering
every inch and every particle.
Only after knowing
the secrets of the deepest roots
can your ears hear
the first whispers of morning flowers;
only after the stop
of heavy rain of tears
can your eyes see
the paintings of rainbows;
only after crossing
the unbuilt fort of seven ramparts
can you find
the one-pillared mansion of the princess;
only after crossing
the desert of flying heaps of sand
can you catch
the ship at the port,
ready to sail

to your native land.
O Adventurer!
You pierce
into the darkness of souls
while counting
the heart-beats and pulse-beats,
you pierce bravely
like a darting arrow
shot
from the bent bow of the void,
and mingle with darkness.
When you have seen
the stars of the day
and when you have heard
the dumb voices
while rooting yourself
deep
in the colonial depths of blind souls--
then, your despair will teach you
the lesson of hopes,
the grief will tell
the meaning of happiness,
the darkness will analyze
the formula of completeness.
and then only will you hear
the voices of empty wells
that speak out the experiences
of the trap of gallows.

Lives, lost in endless agony,
stormy gales of doom
blowing on the snowy mountain-peaks,
onerous lava-flames
in the stomach of volcanoes,

the roars of wild animals
 in the African forests,
 the endless stream of melodious tunes
 churning the heart of peaceful seas,
 the sound of closing doors
 of the colossal shrine of the universe,
 Kaikeyee's¹³ anger-mansion,
 Mandhara's¹⁴ dull movements,
 the agony of the clown,
 the joy of the mad,
 the strife of harlots,
 the sacred sound of Omkar¹⁵,
 Shiva's¹⁶ dance in the evening,
 the thirst of Agastya¹⁷
 who drank
 all the waters of the seven seas,
 mountains
 on the banks of Niagara-tears.
 Do you remember?
 Do you remember
 the rain of hailstones,
 the first lightning in the clouds,
 the laughter, clapping and loud cries
 of children, drenched,
 while running in the flowing rainwater?
 When we were young,
 the rainwater flowed in the stream
 by the side of the hut
 and we used to float paper boats.
 We were young at that time.
 When
 the chilly wind was blowing
 on the green nursery,
 the velvet waves were waving
 up and down
 like the breast of a maiden

lying on her back,
the gazing birds came down
from the blue skies,
the intoxicating fragrance of jasmines
spread
from the garden of the twilight darkness--
then, the lamps were lit.
It was a warm embrace,
like sweating
in a hot water bath.
A feeling of half memory
and half forgetful darkness,
like limbs
scheming with consciousness
for the sake of sleep,
like something whispering in the ears,
sliding by, becoming
smooth, slippery and dripping,
like drops of water
from the lotus leaf,
like words evading memory,
like an unborn fragrance
that puzzles the mind
and deceives the noses,
like a falling flower-petal,
like the beginning of awakening
from the dream;
it is a moment,
a diamond, hidden
beyond the reach of time,
not powerful, but great.
It is making gloomy gestures
with the eyes
from the opened door
unto the depths, lying
between light and shade,

in the abyss
of the darkness of your heart.

4

Lives, lost in endless agony,
when the eyes of thoughts
are closed
in the miserable night,
when there is no hope of liberation;
when the golden conch
of the rising sun
and the silver conch of the moon
have become dumb
in the decayed dark corner,
from where
there is no path of return,
under the central point
where all lines meet,
standing before the sounds
of slow moving chariots of lamentations,
I will ask, my friend!
Please tell me:
From where did we start?
Where have we reached
in the end?
This is the place, where
the black snake of darkness
has bitten.
This is the tide
of flooding venomous waves
in the body.
This is the baffling direction,
this is the gulp
that can't be devoured.

This is the end
of the journey of man,
troublesome, tiresome and enduring.

Life, here
is an uncovered, undecorated
naked picture,
the dreadful dance of a dancer
with curled hair as clouds.

Life, here
is the awful play of skeletons
obsessed by lust;
is the gloomy face
obsessed by death,
beyond the realm of love.

Life, here
is an abhorrent festive zeal
of ghostly play;
is the stumbling dance
of fainting devils
that drank
the vine of blood.

Life, here
is a struggle, a turbulence
and a conflict of crowds;
is an agonizing nightmare
and is the blind greed
of illicit passion.

Life, here
is an endless silent torture of hell;
is monstress Puthana¹⁸,
disguised as a mother,
feeding her poisonous breast-milk.

Life is a mirage
of the impassioned thirsty hearts;
is a rising curly wave

of the fleeting flames of poison.
Life, here
is a miserable death.
Life, here is destruction.
Life, here
is the truth of a hard rocky hand.
What is it that remains,
that you can achieve
in this world,
in this world of sorrow,
in this heaven of owls?
Here, in the world you live in,
the souls (if there are any),
will not fade away forever
like flowers of paper.
How can I bring before you
the faded and dried flowers
of my faiths and hopes
with face
borrowed from others?
The colourful spectacles of senses
having different nature,
the defective barometers
of passions and emotions,
this is the wisdom
of the useless compass.
Where is the pole-star
in this realistic world?
What can this knowledge,
broken, faded and torn into pieces,
tell you?
Which is the result
and which is certain
under the domination of partial truths,
half-truths and untruths?
You cannot recognize the truth,

whose nose and ears are cut,
like the devilish child Bhasmasura¹⁹.
How can you have lasting faith?
How can the light shine steadily?
Our love, friendship and compassion
have become dirty
with the change of hands.
Unadulterated goods
are not found in this shop.
Food, cooked in vegetable oil
has become
the food for your soul!
How can you present
this dusty and dirty offering .
with hands of idealism?
How can you sell
the golden dream
of the human race?

5

Lives, lost in endless agony,
a dreadful forest-fire
burning the Khandava²⁰ woods.
Gandeevi²¹, guarding it,
with his deadly bow and arrows.
blocking the rain of compassion
to extinguish the flames.
Even Maya²², can't be saved.
Our civilization and culture,
the fruits of devotion and dedication,
have become an offering
to the hunger of the fire-god.
Worlds are burning,
sins, hidden beneath the earth,
are unearthed,

skies are almost burnt
in the evening-flames of doom.
For whose sake are Ajanta and Ellora²³?
Literature, arts and dances,
songs and musical instruments
are burning.
The music of the waves
of distant seas of peace
is burning.
Only, the crackling sound
of the fire is heard;
only, the playful movement
of the fire is seen.
Only one message is written
in the book of the world,
in the eternal letters of flames:
Doom, Doom, Doom!
The human intellect is burning,
the heart and the mind are burning,
bodies, senses and limbs are burning.
Experiences, sensibilities,
memories and thoughts are burning
in the flames of envy, hatred, passion,
suspicion, desire and aspirations,
and in the triple fires
of birth, life and death.
Who can put out this fire?
No fire-brigades work
on these fires.
These are the fires
without insurance.
From the fire of ignorance
into the fire of knowledge,
from the fire of disgrace
into the fire of pride,
from the fire of fascination

into the fire of passion,
from the fire of emotion
into the fire of assurance,
from love to hatred,
from pain to anger,
from the coal-fire
of unfulfilled desires
into the soaked firewood-fires
of fulfilled desires,
from the log-fire of consciousness
into the straw-heap-fires of madness,
from the emotional fires of the young
into the repentant fires of the old:
the human soul is travelling
from one fire to another.
Ravana's²⁴ funeral pyre
became Sita's²⁵ fire-test.
A fire-worshipper's devotion
lies in the eternal expectation.
Life, life and life,
vibrations of generations
in your fistful of nerves,
lamentations of ages
in the cavities of your bones,
molten lead
is flowing into your ears.
Two eyes
like erupting volcanoes.
and the glittering teeth
in the mouth of dense darkness,
Deadly poison, not blood,
is in the body.
What you have inherited
is syphilis, acquired
by the human race;
culture, assimilated in the marrow;

earthquakes, storms and famines,
 floods and wars,
 a huge army of locusts
 swarming on fruitful fields,
 offenses, wickedness, cowardice, silliness,
 rape, gallows, inquisition, Gestapo²⁶,
 fires, fires, fire-places, Bhogi-fires²⁷,
 books, paintings and immortal works of art:
 heaping up all things
 at one place, pouring
 the entire petrol-reserve of the earth,
 and lighting the fire, children-like men
 are singing and dancing in madness,
 surrounding the flames.
 Life, life and life,
 pangs of birth-giving
 every moment,
 suffering of death
 every moment.
 Centipedes are crawling,
 scorpions and cobras
 are around me.
 I am hurt and somebody
 is stitching me
 like a shirt;
 somebody is drawing my breath
 from the bronchial tube
 like bubble-bubble:
 In some stream (perhaps it is blood).
 I am drifting and with me
 and around me
 there are thousands of hands and legs,
 beheaded heads, torsos,
 removed eye-balls,
 water-weeds like hair,
 peduncle-like intestines and nerves,

amidst the smoky red light
of kerosene lamp,
in the indiscernible thick fluid
(perhaps it is blood).

I am writhing
like a lump of flesh:
I am crying aloud in fear
looking in all directions,
after raising unheard cries.

All beings are floating;
I can feel
something touching me
in whatever direction
I take a turn.

Soft, smooth or abhorrent
insects are crawling
into my nose and ears;
a hoard of leeches
is surrounding my body.
See, a head is floating
with a red mouth and
an eye in its forehead,
an open hole is mocking at me,
a whirlpool is making noise
like the song of skulls.

They are new rivulets, carrying
the filth of big cities,
joined by the canals of hospitals,
filled with puss and blood.
The blue metallic brilliance
spread in all directions;
the black sky is stretched
like the dirty cloth of the kitchen;
in the speed of the current,
every creature is moving
into death, into life, .

into the drowsy swoon.
 Before me,
 there is no horizon,
 but an endless tunnel;
 walls are dazzling
 like melting iron in the furnace.
 This is the lively cave
 of flesh and blood;
 the walls are drifting
 like crawling insects:
 the current has entered
 the cave, the cavity of creation,
 in the outer ocean,
 in the stillness of the night.
 Who am I, a king or a slave,
 a moving lump of flesh
 or a human being?
 Is it a new birth
 in the flames of fire,
 or an old death
 in the bloody sacrificial fire?

Nicotine magic of detective novels.
 obscene stories, restful armchairs.
 clothes, wrapping up the waist.
 intoxicating medicine of hope.
 rotten cabbage of desire,
 broth of despair,
 torn pages of feelings.
 erotic tonics, produced
 in the heat of rules and morals,
 decaying fruits
 of the poisonous tree of existence,
 consciousness, stretching like rubber,
 collapsing in madness;
 there is a crack

Voices from the empty well

in the road of lazy days
and the cart of life
is in danger.
From childhood into childhood,
from stomach of darkness
into stomach of darkness:
'Again birth and again death.'
We heard, open are the doors
of lunatic asylums,
we heard, invisible dams are broken,
floods are gushing,
the filthy canal is overflowing.
O Man, what have you done?
Remember your actions,
remember the past,
remember your actions.
The stormy gale of doom
in the endless ocean,
the sinking boat
with holes in the bottom,
the journey of life
in the dark night,
the sun, never coming out,
the traveller cannot wait.
Alone, all alone,
man is advancing
through the flames, through the flames
in an unknown direction.

HAMLET'S MONOLOGUE

Today, when the storm stopped
after destroying the creepers, amidst
the fallen leaves and flowers
and the footprints of destruction,
it is known that
the question may be right,
but the answer is wrong.
If the answer is wrong,
then, the question itself is wrong.
Today, the rain-drenched
and sun-burnt boat
has reached the shore;
at last, the broken, half-drowned boat
has crossed the far-off seas.
Now, in the kind and warm darkness,
the action of shadows
does not give pain to senses.
At this moment,
when emotion changes into fatigue
and awareness transforms itself
into heatless light,
into a dream, into a wave
and into a spring of sweet water,
it is known that life and death
are no longer counted.
The things that count here are:
a look, a smile, a ray, a flower
in his mingling of the seas,
still and silent.
What is life, what is death
amidst the tiding floods?
Those swimming,
those not swimming,
those drowning,

those floating:
all reach only one shore,
saving themselves
from the strokes of the tidal waves
of successes and failures
of their action and inaction;
and friends and foes will stand
at the same door.

At every moment, every particle
on the edge of an abyss
is living and dying
hundreds of times:
is sounding
in the churning of wealth and debt,
in the misty puzzle
of indecision and emotions
and in the landing of ebbs and tides
of the heart-throbbing
of suspicious evening embraces,
full of fondness and compassion.

We may forget
the angers and grieves of seas,
but, we will not forget
the foamy smiles in the darkness
and the tunes of mermaids.

The fragrance will not leave,
though these flowers fade away.
the sorrow and joy
will bruise each other,
the dreams and awakenings
will enkindle the soil.

Snuffed wicks alone
will give bright light,
agonized voices alone
will present melodies.

Man will read

his own puzzled writing of lives
after dying thousands of times,
he will advance every moment
step by step

and forget the starting point
by the time he reaches the end.

The forgotten pain will show
a heaven in his palm.
the forgetful mind opens
the new fort of fancy,
the knife-edges of memories
are stained with blood,
this black shield of forgetfulness
knows no sin.

When one sits
on the tallest branch of the sky,
one cannot recollect
what lies under the soil
at the tip of roots.

The forgetfulness of memories.
the bliss of cries,
the conflict of shadows
filling the mirror of consciousness,
the battle of anarchist soldiers
in the indistinct forests.

the hidden deceiver
behind every moving bush:
there is no end
to the moving wheel of life.
the polluted smoky vomiting
of the fires of time
never stops
between two worlds
drowned in the darkness
from both sides,
an oscillating, slender leading path

like the parting of the hair of darkness,
the struggle of existence
like the dwindled winter-river
between the sandy banks.

Half a moment
in the endless time;
a cowardly song, on either side
of the intestines of the abyss;
the invisible hatred
in the blind eyes of the sky:
the hide-and-seek game
of the bloody evening lights
of birth and death
for a moment;
then, everything is darkness,
spread around;
when a stone,
thrown to the sky above
stops in the empty void,
(the heaven of Thrishanku²⁸)
while trying to come down:
agony for a moment.
then, a fall, then, a sleep.
Life is a moment
in the endless time.
Here, difficult is the judgement
about right and wrong
and action alone
glorifies a man.
Every word that is not yours,
is the word of Satan.
a piercing arrow
in the heart of the traveller,
standing at crossroads.
Your ghost only is behind you
and your voice

is the voice of your ghost,
the lightning
behind the screen of memory,
and the spring of past flowers;
though, you yourself are your ghost,
do not believe the ghost, for,
the flower of life never blossoms
wherever the ghost steps in.
It is the jeering of the ghost
in the whispers of your conscience
and the consciousness
is filled with suspicion,
and every step
is an ugly surprise.
Conscience makes cowards of us all,
it soaks the dried stubs of affection
with love,
and becoming a bond,
the thought stops you
in the path of action.
The multitude of thoughts
hides the truth.
that thought is a broken lyre
which is not in tune with action.
The living creature, lost in nightmares,
rolls on the bed.
Will you sit searching for lice
in the hair of life, while
getting rid of the cold of troubles
near the fire-pot of self-pity?
Can you look outside, removing
the blanket from your face?
Can you play
the chess of life
unto the last?
Are you tempted to go to the heaven

of thrown-out dinner plates?
Will you cry out saying that
hell is a blazing furnace?
If the leaves are counted
none will reach the trunk,
if the commentaries are read,
none can find the source of truth,
as the truth evades them.
they milk the cows of facts,
their quest is for conquests
as the conquest of soul eludes them,
there is a heavy outer armour
as the interior is weak.
These huge human crowds
stand
at the back-door of life
becoming a disgrace
to the dignity of the human soul.
for a fistful of unavailable alms
of the left-over food of ages,
until the queues of beggars
are driven away in disdain.
The heckling crowd can never be
an ideal for the bold.
He is a coward
who cannot close his eyes,
fearing
the occurrence of dreams:
who cannot open his eyes
thinking
that dreams will melt away:
who turns away his head
seeing the liberty of the sky;
and who prostrates in the prison
suffocating.
Breaths of a cowardly heart,

despairs of cowardly eyes.
Whose is the boldness?
Whose is the cowardice?
Forgetfulness
is a deserted forest,
sleeping consciousness
is the guard of the night.
The hidden wild animal
stops the story
from reaching its end;
it is roaring
behind the bush of darkness,
the body sweats,
the hands and legs become numb,
the burden of a ghost
sat on the chest,
the fearless rat-race
in the hollow corpse,
the hunger of elephant's stomach
is stretching
the trunk of nightmares.
The black rock
knows no fear,
only breath brings fear.
In the end, when the coward
becomes fearless,
the old whore is calling
standing on the road.
While one goes away
bending his head,
the other reciprocates
while standing.
Who, between these two,
is a coward?
In the royal court, you have seen
the straw-like gray beards

suggesting to Bhagirathi²⁹
how to get out
of the thigh of saint Jahnu³⁰,
after counting
the duties and actions.
The king who evades kingship
under the cover
of the armour of kingly duties,
and the queen who counts diamonds
studded in the latest crown, flashing
in the brightness of thousand lights.
Trying to conceal that
which deserved no hiding
and trying to exhibit that
which the people do not like to see,
princesses are gleaming
in their transparent attires.
What a pity!
The shameless onion-layer-dresses
and the borrowed lustre of cosmetics.
Have you observed this life,
standing in the shadow
of the pillars of sorrow?
Have you heard the heckling
in the silence of the heart?
Have you run away from life
or has life run away from you?
Those, standing on the bank,
can see the speed of the whirl-pool
in the river.
Those, standing away
from the passionate river-currents
will measure
the strength of rising waves
and call them as roaring currents.
If knowledge, becoming a barrier

leaves them in the middle,
 if knowledge becomes an obstacle
 by widening the gap,
 they leave the flowing river
 beholding its groan and roar.
 If they keep quiet puzzled,
 they cannot learn
 the art of flowing
 from the water of life.
 By becoming weak
 knowledge will only show
 the cracks
 in the armour of ignorance
 and separate the husk
 from the grain of life
 with the help of winnowing baskets.

Knowledge, like a saw,
 cuts man into pieces,
 ties the intimacy of non-entity
 to the mean agony of entity,
 fills the dark corners of the mind
 with the light of woes
 and cuts the navel-string
 between man and the earth.
 Knowledge unfolds
 the significance of an atom
 in the endless universe.
 the meanness of awareness
 in the helplessness of the earthly man.
 Knowledge points out
 the evaporation of dewdrops
 in the paths of deserts,
 the flow of convoys, failing
 to reach the shore of success.
 Birds, with tired wings, falter

seeing the blue shades
on the distant shores of the sky.
The finger-tips of the painter
slow down
beholding the beautiful form.
A love yearns
for a feeling of losing himself:
when he loses himself,
he does not have any feeling,
the directions will change
before he reaches his goal.
There is a pain in the knowledge
and a suspicion in the pain,
the boon of knowledge
is an unanswered eternal question.
The journey from the unknown
to the unknown is knowledge.
Knowledge is hazardous,
knowledge is a fascinating trouble.
Knowledge is the tale of the journey
of defeats of the incompetent man.
Knowledge is an elixir,
the definition of the pain of life.
Knowledge is the power of truth,
the language of expression
of helplessness.
Knowledge is the sacrificial fire
that can burn and turn
all actions into ashes.
It is also true that action
can extinguish it,
as drenched firewood
slows down the fire.
The multitude of sinful actions
will fill the fire of knowledge
with its shadows and slows down

the speed of flames.
Pure action can ignite
the fire of knowledge,
the fire of knowledge
can brighten the actions.
When action and knowledge
will be in tune,
there will be no worry
for the flying birds.
When liberty is not frightened
by suspicion,
there will be no need for man
to argue with himself.

THE AGONY OF ARJUNA

Arjuna³¹:

[*"Dharmakshetre kurukshetre"*, etc.]

These two armies of eighteen divisions
opposing one another,
stand near the altar
like sacrificial animals,
still as the ocean
before the stormy gale of doom.
It is an illusive peace.

In a moment
all will be inspired
by the trumpets of war.
Impatient steeds will no longer
bear the delay.

The conch '*Panchajanya*'³² in one hand
and bow '*Gandeeva*'³³ in the other.
Flag '*Kapidhvaja*'³⁴ fluttering
like my troubled heart;
my left arm is trembling;
everything is ready
in the deadly battlefield;
my heart is vibrating
by the frightening sounds of trumpets.
O Krishna³⁵, there is a baffling fretfulness,
a pathetic song,
a new philosophic perspective.
My entire body is sweating,
a new distress is spreading,
inaction is overwhelming me
which I never knew before in battle.
Why not the lute of battle-zeal sound
like the broken string of a bow?
Why not, today, anger shed

its bloody lustre from my eyes?
 Why my mighty arms
 that crushed mountains,
 held thunderbolts,
 defeated deadly enemies
 become tender stalks
 unable to bear the burden
 of lotus flowers blooming in a lake?
 Darkness is spreading before my eyes,
 a horrible experience,
 the peacock of doom is dancing,
 opening its feathers before me.
 I cannot fight, O Krishna,
 turn back the chariot,
 drive it back at once
 from this place of death.

Sri Bhagavan:
 "klaibyam ma sma gamah partha", etc.

Arjuna:

Who is impotent?
 Whose heart is weak?
 Which is the way?
 The thin thorn of doubt
 is not dying at all.
 Before me, on the other side,
 are the oldest, god-like warriors,
 teachers, grandsires and heroes.
 Here are the pious flowers of worship
 in the temple of Bharat³⁶
 on whose blood
 these chariots will leave the traces
 of their wheels.
 The essence of bravery of Bharat

will be burnt---the priceless and marvelous,
the necklace, adoring the Mother's breast.
Love, friendship and righteousness
will turn into ashes
when affections and morals
lose their lustre
in the battle's sacrificial fire.

In a moment,
how can they become
born-enemies, who,
until yesterday, were so close
as the tongue to the lips?
What can we do in the end,
conquering the graveyard
and setting fire
to the garden of life?

Our suicidal thoughts of destruction
will only do more harm to us
and our own field
will turn barren.

O Krishna, we reap as we sow.
The thorny bushes, planted by us
will hurt the feet of future travellers.

The sinful dust, raised by us
surely will make them dirty.

Someone has to give
the answer to our question.
Who will own the responsibility
without fear

for the birth of the dead devilish child,
the result of our deeds?

Not only we,
but the entire world will taste
the outcome of our deeds.
The progress of all lives
lie

only in our footprints.
The echoes of the caves
of hidden mountains
in the tossing waves of the ocean,
the vibrations of our inspired tunes
in the waves of the wind,
the echo of one thought
on the banks of another mind,
the reflection
of the friendly smile of the lamp
on the dark screen of night:
every deed I do
will be binding on tomorrow.
How should I act?
This duty is hard,
difficult is the option,
for, the selection
is behind the curtain of darkness.
O Lord, before us,
is the array of death, and
an impatient host of heroes
with the unbridled battle-zeal.
How many of them
will return to their tents
by the end of the day?
How many will roll
on the banks of the sand
of eternal silence?
How many will see
the rays of tomorrow's rising sun?
How many will have
eternal peace
on this hard ground?
The severed heads, legs and hands,
and the traces of blood
on the green lands,

cannot say
to whom they belong.
The head, as white as snow,
will roll in the dust,
the coward jackal will kick
the crown of my teacher,
animals waiting in the dark
for the death of the wounded,
cries of the dying
for a draught of water,
disturbed sleep in the tents,
frightening nightmares,
rise and fall of waves of heads
in the tide of black ocean,
homes, without males
in Indraprastha,
shining eyes of thieves
in the deserted night,
queries of children
sitting near the lamps,
what consolation
can doubtful mothers give?
How can creepers
grow without support?
In which woods
they search for support?
Who has the right to take that
which cannot be returned?
If violence is right
who is safe here?
Eternal is every letter written
on the slate of life,
where is the chance to correct
when every wrong is immortal!
A deed, done, will never perish,
coming generations will ask the ruins

of the victory-towers of fame,
 through the chirps of crickets.
 What will be your reply?
 To whom can we deliver
 the letter of repentance?
 Then, the tombs will yawn,
 opening their mouths,
 exposing our mad deeds
 while counting intestines.
 If the fields are ploughed,
 the skulls, while laughing aloud,
 will pronounce the greatness
 of the predecessors
 to one and all
 with their thousand mouths.
 Will then all people
 bend down their heads in shame?
 Will they share
 the sin with pride?
 The valorous children of Bharat,
 on either side,
 will perish in the battle.
 Which peasant will perceive
 the odour of the earth's womb?
 The widowed earth
 will search for amorous men,
 and all survivors will lick
 the tasted drinks of lives.
 Will our babies, our children,
 the babies and children
 of our children,
 frightened by darting arrows,
 shot from the enemy's bow,
 seek shelter
 in the desolate dense forest
 or wait like dogs

for the pieces of meat?
For whom is this battle?
Who will eat
the poisonous fruit?
Whose eyes' feast is this?
Who are those mental patients?
What can they enjoy
who die here?
What can even those
who survive enjoy?
How can the future generations
be happy
and how can they advance
on the way, filled with bones?
Whoever wins here,
at the end, the result is the same,
only that will remain
are the pyre-flames of sorrow.
Defeated in the battle,
that ought to be lost,
gone to the bottom
of the dark depths of decadence,
who needs victory?
The way has no turn.
There is no door of light
for that prison of dark curtains.
Where will be that uprightness
for which this battle stands?
In which sleep of forgetfulness
will it see cowardly dreams?
When all our hopes
turn into despair,
when all our joys
become jokes,
when all our greetings
become mourning.

when our sown seeds of deeds
give such a rich crop
that the plants cannot
bear the burden of fruits,
when life becomes
an unbearable burden,
when the shore is farther
day by day,
when the time becomes dreadful,
the suffering becomes unbearable.
Who will find a lasting mental peace
in the illusive enjoyments
illuminated by blood?
The dance of the mirthful melodies
reminds us
of the fear of the distressed,
the death-cradle will swing
before the hopeful eyes
of the wounded.
By the evening
millions of killed soldiers
near the row of mansions
brightened
by the golden light of lamps.
the stamp of dreadful nightmares
on the sleep of those
in luxurious beds.
The inner smoke-wave of pollution
will block the rays of liberation.
These memories
will not leave us,
our distressed life
will turn into a mockery.
The chasing shadow of death
will never give up.
The soft forgetful sleepiness

will never come.
Let us go, O Lord,
no need of kingdom,
no need of kingdom.
Let us not pour oil
with our own hands,
into the fire of hatred.
Is there no shelter
on this far-stretched earth?
A beggarly life is better
than feeding
on the food of blood.
Mother Nature will not refuse
to feed her own children;
she will not reject
claiming that
every inch belongs to her.
Why is this conflict?
Why this awful commotion?
Certain is the fall of that man
who is cruel by nature.
If life were a battle,
then, the victor would be death.
What is the aim,
if panic is the result?
Let us go where snow lulls
the mountain to sleep,
where rows of pine trees turn
the edge of the valley green,
where life is a flower
on the soft bed of grass,
where laughter is the echo
of the songs of streams,
where there is no sorrow and no sin,
where time never stops
and man has no end,

and when tender golden light
never fades away,
O Lord, let us go,
there alone lies peace.

Sri Bhagavan:
"hatha swadharmancha kirtincha". etc.

Arjuna:
O Lord, I have no well-wisher
in this world but you.
O Lord, in what heavens,
beyond you, is shelter?
Your signal only is the pole-star
for my endless doubt.
My thought is always
a servant of your suggestion.
Which is the power
that makes me climb
the peak of ideals?
Which is the device
that makes me recover
the scattered nest of faith,
but for your steadfast help?
In you alone lies my salvation.
A word of your assurance
will become
my impregnable armour.
My form
expressing itself in your eyes
and in the frowning of your eyebrows
will become
a curse to my enemies.
Protected is my liberty
like a diamond
in your fist.

You have to train
the cowardly soldiers
of my thoughts.
You show me the way
to get out of this riddle.
You dispel the doubts
of my weak heart.
Today, I stand
at the crossroads of life.
Tell me, on which side
is the flower-garden
and on which side
is the burial ground.
What is my duty
at this moment of doom?
On which side of this volcano
lies the goal?
How can the people
of all ages be happy
and remember with joy
our decision so wise?

RASKALNIKOV³⁷

Sonia³⁸, where is the way?
 Entwined creepers of thoughts
 in the dense forest of the mind,
 the rays of the sun
 never reach there.
 The sounds of the gossip of leaves
 in the dense forest
 when the dark midnight
 has unfolded her black hair.
 Fear alone is shining
 on the green face of nature.
 and the heart
 filled with illusion.
 All things are present
 but there is an emptiness in all,
 and meanness
 in the minds of human beings.
 The concepts of different theories;
 the conflict of diverse contradictions;
 unceasing rain of fire
 on the heart of the cursed man;
 the vain exercise of stale logic
 on the result of cause and effect;
 and the unending discussions
 about the multiplication
 of changing ages of planets,
 by those fickle minds
 that can't see
 what lies there
 beyond the fence,
 by those restless minds
 that can't know
 the way of knowing
 the minds of others.

The interior is a dark cave,
the blind intellect, a flying owl;
turning into a musk-deer
it perceives
the perfume of musk
oozing out of its own navel.

Where is the light here
if it is hidden inside?
Why is the rider
of the steed of darkness
trembling?
The exterior is empty,
the great city
is like an anthill of darkness.
Every tower
of sky-embracing palaces
is baffling the mind.
The spread out king ways
are like lines present
in the palms of demons.
The heckling sounds of drunkards
reverberating in the lanes.
The serpent of life
has thousand tongues,
hundred thousand bisections
and millions of teeth.
Where has the heart of man
gone astray?
Sinews are the heaps of sand
in this corpse of desert.
Is life a nectarous river?
Man is only lost in himself,
in the dark mine
of hidden sorrows.
Is there any consolation

in the echoes of personal groans?

Snowfalls

and the flowing tears of dreams
before the eyes.

The moist traces of tears
on the cheeks of sleeping babies.

The tumultuous fair of existence:

Where is the mother

and where is the child?

Who can find any help
in this unruly crowd?

The horrifying loud laughter
of the wild animals
in the unfamiliar forest of faces.

The trap of scare
displayed

by the sounds of falling leaves.

Here, who is a well-wisher
and who is a friend?

Here, man is all alone
in the deep mine of his self
from where

the unceasing noisy stream of darkness
is gushing out.

Sonia, where is the light?

High rising waves

are hissing

like hurt serpents.

Dreadful storms are groaning
between

the earth and the sky.

The fleeting tide

is vomiting foam

breaking all the bonds.

Where is the shelter?

The world is succumbing
in the prison of dense darkness.
The tiny isle of human heart
is battered
by the rolling tidal oceans.
This well of dense darkness
is covered by the night
and by the distressing mist.
Where is the way?
Where is the diamond
with the power of golden touch,
the great radiance of life?
Where is the bright sun-boat
that can reach
the bank of Styx of darkness?
Sonia, where is the light?
Sonia, you are the divine creeper
in the form of a maiden.
O you, the tiny, warm, soothing
sweet heart.
beyond the realm of passion!
You are the supporting branch
for the cursed falling Thrishankus.
You have explored
the deep depths of lives,
the shadows of the red edges
of the sacrificial blood of the heart,
the venomous traces of hidden insects
concealed
under the wrinkles of experience,
the impatience, emerging
from the burning fire of hunger,
the pathetic human body,
an anthill of sins, greed and mockery:
You can't bear their blows.
All the tears of the world

are a garland of pearls for you.
Your lotus of love
has bloomed
in the muddy lake of sin.
The peaceful and charming abode of bees
is full
with exalted fondness
for nectar and fragrance.
You, who knew that
which you ought not to have known,
you can make me know that
which ought to be known.
You, who travelled in desolate paths,
can show me the way.
You, who were born
and brought up
as an offspring of sins,
can liberate me, the sinner,
today, from the curse.
You, who suffered and distressed
in the darkness of sorrow,
can smile, today,
as the moonlight of my night.
Sonia, in the night of suspicion,
in the dreadful forest of soul-tortures,
where is the way,
where is the light
for the ghosts, gone astray?
Where is the old woman of death,
who kept life itself as mortgage?
Where has she gone,
taking away the right
to show the way
of redemption of the debt?
The wheel of time
has reversed itself,

no difference is there
between the day and night.
The globe, tainted by bloody lustre
is the king of day and night!
Where are the charming beauties
of dawning ideals of the past?
Today, the horizon of the eyes
of the murderer
is disgorging bloody lustre.
Today, your proud and raised head,
is prostrating and kissing, with love,
the dusty feet of sinful deeds.
Where is the logic today?
Intellectualism
is riding on the head!
Has the egoistic lion-roar
melted in remorse?
Where is your wisdom?
Blind fear, aversion and sorrow
are left behind.
The surging river of acute madness
has flooded the entire world.
Fixed is the destiny of man,
Judas³⁹ in you has awokened.
No swan is here
who can separate
milk from water.
Again and again, one voice
is shaking your nerves.
Now, the odour of death
mixing with the taste of blood
is haunting the murderer.
Though tried, the past
could not wipe out
the memory of a face.
An evil death occurs

better than a million births.
Fear is momentary,
but, the result
never leaves me alone.
The request of two eyes
has spread
over the earth and the sky.
The entire world
is lost in sorrow
and emits dense darkness.
Where is peace?
An illusion!
Mocking blades of grass,
mockeries of directions,
black cobras
on the cloudy forehead.
My heart
is the court of justice,
trying me for my crime.
Spies in every nerve
keep a watch over me.
No salvation for me, Sonia!
I seek your shelter.
I am blind, though having eyes,
you must stand by my side.
It is the time, when there are
warmth of wealth and dearth
and the snow blanket of twilight,
when trees shed their leaves
and birds their feathers.
The seed of our victory,
perhaps, is lost
somewhere in the sleep.
No light and darkness here,
and no Shepherd of stars.
We have crossed

even the border,
we can't hear past calls.
Sonia, you only can give me shelter
in this empty land.
Where is the trace
of the fire way
that leads to the land
of peaceful and happy life?
Lazarus⁴⁰ will come
to the eternal land of light
discarding the dead drowsiness.
The call of your inspired voice
is the lively hymn
at the time of the Yagna⁴¹ of death,
liberating the soul,
from all its physical bonds.
The same call
is the shower of awakening
of the white conch
defined in shadows,
in the mornings
of the known and the forgotten.
The sound
of the tossing and bedewed petals
is rising above
in the honeyed path
in the garden of complete silence.
A call from the dead distress
for the right path of new life;
from the darkness to light,
from illusion to peace.
Sonia, show me the path,
show me the light,
show me the path.

NOTES

1. Urvasi: a divine damsel who took her birth from the milky ocean when it was churned by the gods and the demons according to the Hindu mythology.
She dances in the court of Indra, the king of the gods in heaven. She is considered to be the symbol of ideal feminine beauty.
2. Jerusalem: The Capital of Israel from antient times and the holy city for the Christians and the Jews.
3. Benares: One of the most ancient cities of India, situated on the bank of river Ganges. It is the holy city for the Hindus. The famous Viswanath temple built for Lord Shiva, one of the divine trio of the Hinduism, exists there.
4. Mekka: The holy city of worship for the Muslims situated in Saudi Arabia.
5. Bodhi tree: It is the tree under which Gautama Buddha attained his enlightenment and hence derived the name Buddha. This is called as the tree of enlightenment.
6. Indra: The king of the gods according to the Hindu mythology. He is one of the prominent gods in Reg Veda.
7. Gandharvas: One sect of the gods renowned for the art of music according to Hindu mythology.
8. Rambha: One of the four divine damsels who dances in the court of Indra.
She seduces saints as per the orders of Indra.

9. Indraprastha: The name given to the capital of Pandavas who shared half of Kuru kingdom before they lost it to Kauravas in the game of dice. The city is supposed to be far away from Hastinapur(present Delhi) and its traces only remained in History.

10. Takshaka: The king of serpents and the son of Kashyapa and Kadruva. When the king Parikshit was cursed by a saint that he will die by the bite of a serpent, the king began to live in tight security. But serpent Takshaka disguising himself as a Brahmin priest could able to reach him and killed him by his deadly bite.

11. Brahmin: A person belonging to the highest caste in the Hindu society. The profession of this class is to teach and act as priests in Hindu temples.

12. Parikshit: The son of Abhimanyu and Uttara and becomes the king of Hastinapur after Pandavas left to the heaven.

13. Kaikeyi: The second of the three wives of the king Dasharadha, father of Rama. Dasharadha used to love her very much. When she came to know that her husband wanted to make Rama to succeed him as the king, she objected his decision as per the advice of her old maid servant Mandhara and asked him to crown her son Bharata as the king. She was lying on her bed in the chamber of anger when the king went to see her.

14. Mandhara: She was a faithful old maid servant who accompanied Kaikeyi to Ayodhya, the capital of the king Dasharadha. She is also Kaikeyi's adviser in the palace. She is clever and cunning. Even her steps imitate her cunning mind.

15. Omkar: The sacred and mystical syllable 'om'. God Almighty, according to the Hindu mythology.

16. Shiva: Lord Shiva, the annihilator of the universe. He performs his violent dance 'Tandava' to destroy all the worlds.

17. Agastya: The name of the sage who drank all the waters of the seven oceans to destroy the king Sagara's sons who were hiding in the sea waters having irritated the sage.

18. Puthana: A demonic woman who was commissioned by Kamsa, the king of Mathura, to kill child Krishna. She transforms herself into a charming mother and tries to kill him by making him suck her breasts filled with poisonous milk. But the child Krishna kills her by sucking her life according to the Hindu mythology. Here, she is the symbol of all attractions of modern life, which are detrimental to the healthy life of man.

19. Bhasmasura: He was the king of demons and a great devotee of God Shiva. When Lord Shiva was satisfied with the meditation of the demon, he told him to ask what he wanted. Bhasmasura requested him to grant him a boon by which he can convert anybody into ashes by putting his palm on his head. God Shiva has given the boon to the demon. He wanted to test the reality of the boon by placing his palm on the head of Shiva. Seeing the approaching danger Shiva began to run being chased by Bhasmasura. Then

Lord Vishnu comes there in the form of a charming damsel Mohini and lures the demon towards him. Bewitched by the beauty of Mohini he wanted to possess her. She asks him to take bath in a lake nearby. When he put his palm on his head while bathing he turns into ashes. Bhasmasura perished by his own flaw. Here Bhasmasura is a symbol of the instinct of suicide.

20. Khandava: A wood which has become a prey to the hunger of the god of fire according to Mahabharata. When the god of fire approached Arjuna saying that he was dying of hunger and wanted to eat the Khandava wood by burning it. When the fire-

god was burning the wood getting assurance from Arjuna, Varuna, the god of rain, wanted to save the wood from burning. Then, Arjuna has built a roof of arrows above the wood and the fire-god has turned the wood into ashes.

21. Gandeevi: Another name of Arjuna. Since the name of the divine bow in the hands of Arjuna is Gandeeva, Arjuna is also known by this name.

22. Maya: The architect who built the capital for Pandavas. He lives near the Khandava wood.

23. Ajantha and Ellora: These are the famous caves in the state of Maharashtra, near the city of Aurangabad. There are numerous images and paintings of Buddhist art on the walls of these caves.

24. Ravana: The anti-hero of the epic Ramayana. He abducts Sita, the wife of Rama by deceit. Rama kills him in the battle and rescues his wife.

25. Sita: The daughter of the king Janaka and the wife of Rama in the epic Ramayana.

26. Gestapo: Nazi secret police.

27. Bhogi-fires: The fires lit on the occasion of Bhogi festival in south India to celebrate the season of harvest and also get rid of the winter cold.

28. The heaven of Trishanku: The sage Vishwamitra gave a promise to king Trishanku that he will send him to heaven with his mortal body. As the king almost reached heaven, Indra, the king of gods, threw him down from the heaven. When Trishanku was trembling with fear while falling, Vishwamitra stopped him in the skies and created a separate

heaven for him with his superhuman powers. This heaven is called 'The heaven of Trishanku'. This symbolises dilemma or any such other situation in human life.

29. Bhagirathi: Another name of river Ganges. According to Hindu mythology the divine river takes its birth at the feet of God Vishnu and stays in heaven. But Bhagirath, one of the kings of solar dynasty, meditates and pleases the divine river. He asked the river to descend on earth. Accepting the wish of the king the river followed his path and made it its own course.

30. Jahnu: According to another story Ganges has emerged from the thigh of the saint Jahnu. This is the reason why Ganges is also known as Jahnava.

31. Arjuna: The son of Kunthi and one of the heroes of the epic Mahabharata. Lord Krishna preaches him the Bhagavadgeetha standing between the confronting divisions of two armies before the battle of Mahabharata started.

32. Panchajanya: The name of the conch in the hand of Arjuna. The blowing of the conch signifies the beginning of the battle.

33. Gandeeva: The name of Arjuna's divine bow.

34. Kapidhaja: The flag fluttering on the chariot of Arjuna with the emblem of a monkey(Hanuman dwells in the picture) on its cloth.

35. Krishna: According to Hindu mythology Krishna is considered to be the best incarnation of God Vishnu and also the hero of Mahabharata and Bhagavata. He preaches Bhagavatgeeta to Arjuna at the field of battle.

36. Bharat: India, the seeker of light.

37. Raskalnikov: The hero of the novel 'Crime and punishment' written by the famous Russian novelist Dostoyevsky.
38. Sonia: The name of a lady close to Raskalnikov.
39. Judas: One of the twelve disciples of Jesus Christ. He turns to be an informer and points at Jesus by kissing his hand when the soldiers came in search of Jesus. The name of Judas has become a symbol of treachery from that time.
40. Lazarus: He gets salvation and reaches the land of light.
41. Yagna: A ritual of Hindus. It is performed kindling fire and the devotees offer precious things to the god of fire in order to satisfy other gods and get their blessings.

